

# City of Chandler



## VITA

### Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program

## Volunteer FAQ

#### What is VITA?

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program is a volunteer driven program that provides free tax preparation and asset development services to low and moderate income taxpayers, the elderly and those with disabilities. Chandler's VITA sites are located at the First Credit Union and Community Services of Arizona. Including volunteer training, VITA's tax season operates January 2 - April 10 in Chandler.

#### What is EITC?

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Program, the largest federal tax benefit program, provides more than \$43 billion to low-income working families and individuals. Unfortunately, up to 25% of those eligible are not even aware of the program and millions of dollars remain unclaimed by families and individuals struggling to lift themselves out of poverty. VITA volunteers make a real difference in the lives of low-income families by helping them claim EITC which can be worth as much as \$5,657 and can boost a family's income by up to 35 percent.

#### Who can obtain assistance at a VITA site?

Income tax assistance is available for low-income individuals and families, individuals with disabilities, non-English speaking taxpayers, and the elderly. The VITA program is aimed at those for whom paid assistance may be out of reach.

#### What difference will I make?

You will have a direct impact on the lives of working families and the communities in which they live. One hour of your time, an average tax return, provides an average refund of \$1,800 to Arizona families. By helping working families and individuals claim every tax benefit they're entitled to, you can help boost a family's yearly income by up to 35 percent.

#### What kind of experience is needed to become a volunteer?

Only the spirit of volunteerism! No other experience is required.

# Chandler VITA FAQ



**Chandler • Arizona**  
*Where Values Make The Difference*

## **Will I receive training?**

Yes! Training is free and no accounting or prior tax preparation experience is necessary. The subject matter includes free basic income tax law for federal and state such as Forms 1040, and 1040EZ and related schedules such as A, B, and C-EZ. The entire course takes approximately 20 hours to complete, with a self-paced online certification test at the end.

## **When is the training held, and how do I get signed up?**

Chandler's VITA training will be held every Saturday in January (2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup>) from 8 am to 12 pm at the Boys and Girls Club, 300 E. Chandler Blvd (In their Intel Computer Clubhouse). Classes will include all materials and refreshments, but each class does cover new information and it is important that new volunteers can commit to the entire training schedule. The class on the 23 however, is mandatory for both new and returning volunteers. In addition to the training classes, open practice labs will be held every Wednesday in January (6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 27<sup>th</sup>) in the Western International University building, 55 N. Arizona Pl.- Suite 110. The practice labs are self-paced and allow volunteers to get experience using the software with the VITA trainers available to answer questions. This year there is no need to sign up for classes, the trainings are open to whomever can make the classes. However, please take the time to fill out our volunteer survey at <http://chandleraz.gov/vita>.

## **How many hours do I need to work?**

We ask that new volunteers commit to the 20 hours of training and all volunteers are required to attend class on the 23rd. Outside of the trainings you can volunteer for days and times that best fit your schedule. Volunteers are asked to serve a minimum of 20 hours during the February through April tax season, but this is not a requirement.

## **Do I get to pick when/where I get to volunteer?**

Yes you do. VITA does its best to allow volunteers to work when and where they want, with day, evening and weekend shifts available. In addition, VITA will never assign shifts to a volunteer outside of their specified site and/or availability. However, site coordinators must balance the number of volunteers with the demand and available resources. If there are a large number of people available on a particular night, not every volunteer that would like to work that night will be able to. To most effectively serve our clients and make sure that volunteers get enough volunteer opportunities to come away with a meaningful experience, we request that volunteers be willing to work at both sites and provide at least two periods of availability. During the 2010 tax season Chandler's VITA program will operate, and have volunteer opportunities, at the following sites and times:

### **First Credit Union:**

(25 S. Arizona Pl.)

Monday & Wednesdays: Walk-in  
5 pm - 8 pm

Friday: By Appointment

9:30 am - 3:30 pm – Reservations will be accepted in person during walk-in hours.

### **Community Services of Arizona:**

(650 N. Arizona Ave.)

Monday - Friday: By Appointment  
8 am - 4 pm; Call (480) 963-4321

Tuesdays & Thursdays: Walk-in  
5 pm - 8 pm

Saturdays: Walk-in  
10 am - 2 pm

# Chandler VITA FAQ



## **I'm nervous about helping people with their taxes. What if I make an error?**

All returns prepared are reviewed by another VITA volunteer, as part of a Quality Review process (in accordance with IRS guidelines). In addition, the IRS and seasoned VITA volunteers will provide help and tax technical assistance.

## **Are bilingual volunteers needed?**

Yes. Bilingual assistance is greatly needed. Bilingual assistance is needed in many languages, including Spanish, Chinese and various East Indian dialects.

## **There are several volunteer positions available in VITA:**

### **Tax Preparer**

As a Tax Preparer, you will assist working families with their returns during the tax season. Your efforts will ensure that working families do not pay expensive tax preparation fees and are able keep all the money to which they are entitled. You will also help families claim tax benefits which can boost a working family's income up to 35 percent.

Tax Preparers will be required to complete and pass IRS tax law and tax software training and tests. Specific duties include: preparing basic 1040 tax returns and related schedules; preparing a correct and accurate return based on information provided by the taxpayer; answering related tax questions; and provide the taxpayer with a copy of the completed return. Tax Preparers also responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of taxpayer information.

### **Screeners**

Screeners play a vital role by ensuring that working families get the help and services they need to improve their financial well-being. As a screener, you will provide a friendly and welcoming atmosphere while checking that families have the necessary personal finance information on hand for volunteers to assist them with their returns.

Screeners will be required to complete and pass IRS tax law and tax software training. Specific duties include: performing a screening process of all taxpayers to determine the type of assistance needed and ensuring that the taxpayer has brought all necessary information (e.g. W-2, 1099's, last year's returns) to complete their returns. Screeners also monitor site traffic to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for all taxpayers being checked in to receive assistance.

### **Greeter**

As a Greeter, you will create a welcoming atmosphere at VITA sites while also helping to check in families and individuals accessing VITA services. While tax training is not required for greeters, a positive attitude is critical to being effective in this important role.

If you have any additional questions about the City of Chandler's VITA program or volunteering, please visit the City's VITA web-site at <http://chandleraz.gov/vita>, call Neighborhood Resources at (480) 782-4320 or email [flor.lara@chandleraz.gov](mailto:flor.lara@chandleraz.gov)